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NEWS RELEASE

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July 3, 2015

K-12 SCHOOLS GET \$300 MILLION BOOST FOR SEISMIC SAFETY, NEEDED IMPROVEMENTS IN BUDGET PROPOSAL

(SALEM) – Legislative leaders have agreed to provide \$300 million in bond funding to help local districts make seismic safety and other improvements to K-12 schools across Oregon. The funds will be included in the Legislature’s \$1.2 billion capital construction budget, which will be considered by the Joint Ways and Means Sub-Committee on Capital Construction Friday.

“We’re allocating hundreds of millions of dollars – more than ever before – to help Oregon protect her children,” said Senate President Peter Courtney (D-Salem/Gervais/Woodburn) “We know there will be a major quake. We know too many of our schools will collapse. These funds will help us fix our schools. These funds will save children’s lives.”

A total of \$175 million will go to the Seismic Rehabilitation Grant Program, which is used to make at risk schools safer in the event of a major earthquake. A 2007 survey by the Oregon Department of Geology and Mineral Industries found that more than 1,000 school buildings in Oregon were at high or very high risk of collapse in an earthquake.

Courtney sponsored the legislation requiring the survey along with the 2005 measure that created the grant program that distributes the funds. To date \$33.7 million has been spent to rehabilitate 37 school buildings. In August 2014, Courtney made a public request for lawmakers to make a much larger investment in school safety improvements.

The remaining \$125 million will be set aside to provide matching funds to assist school districts in making safety or other necessary improvements to aging school facilities. A 2014 report found

that deferred maintenance needs in Oregon's 197 school districts totaled at least \$7.6 billion. The grant program is contained in SB 447, sponsored by Senator Richard Devlin (D-Tualatin)

"Our property tax system makes it virtually impossible for some school districts maintain or replace old and deteriorating school buildings on their own," said Devlin, Senate Co-Chair of the Joint Ways and Means Committee. "In 2010, voters gave the state the authority to assist school districts in their efforts. It's an untraditional role for the state, but all of us have a responsibility to do what we can to see that all children are learning in a safe and secure environment."

The bonding package under consideration by the Legislature also includes \$30 million for grants for seismic improvements to emergency response facilities like hospitals and police and fire stations. The \$30 million is double the amount set aside for emergency facilities in each of the past three budget cycles.